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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7290
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4550
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1809
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0573
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1847
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3127
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1779
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4024
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LA PAZ 002576

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TAGS: ECON PGOV PREL BL

SUBJECT: INSIDERS' VIEW INTO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

REF: LA PAZ 2372

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Krishna Urs for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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¶1. (C) Summary: Several opposition representatives in the Constituent Assembly (CA) told poloff September 18-20 that the Assembly is in "complete chaos." Two of the delegates blamed the Assembly's inefficiency on delegate inexperience and the MAS' heavy hand. They also complained about surveillance and discrimination within the Assembly. None of the three delegates were optimistic about the Assembly's ability to move forward. In a September 19 meeting with the prefects, Vice President Garcia Linera proposed a two-thirds vote on departmental autonomy, land reform and hydrocarbons revenues and a simple majority vote on all other matters. Press reports indicate that Podemos will reject the proposal, holding out for two-thirds on all issues. Recently President Morales publicly ordered the MAS to force through rules for the Assembly's operation by September 27 by a simple majority vote. While our interpretation of the convoking legislation supports Podemos' position, this may be the best deal Podemos is going to get. End summary.

¶2. (C) Several CA opposition representatives told poloff September 18-20 that the Assembly is in "complete chaos." They said without rules of order, the Assembly cannot and does not function. All complained that the CA does not have fixed hours for its sessions, causing them to wait each day for notice, either via phone call or the local news, that they should convene. Adding to the uncertainty, Assembly leadership does not provide advance notice of topics the Assembly will address, so delegates cannot prepare for debate. Podemos representatives Carlos Goitia and Susana Campos both noted that many delegates drink heavily during Assembly sessions, and that many were intoxicated the morning of MAS leader Ramon Loaiza's fall (reftel).

¶3. (C) Goitia and National Unity delegate Jorge Lazarte blamed the Assembly's inefficiency on delegate inexperience and the MAS' heavy hand. Lazarte said there are discussions within the Assembly, but no real dialogue. He said most

delegates fail to keep up with the debate at hand and interject comments on unrelated topics. Lazarte said there is "no point" talking to the Assembly's board of directors because they do not have authority to negotiate; instead, their negotiating authority comes directly from President Morales. On procedural matters, Goitia said the opposition's ability to be heard in the Assembly depends on Assembly President (and MAS delegate) Silvia Lazarte's mood. Goitia said she arbitrarily calls on representatives to speak, gives them a time limit, but then abruptly cuts that time short. He also complained that the MAS delegates frequently make and break deals with the opposition; he told poloff about a recent episode in which the MAS had agreed to a recess. After the CA adjourned, a Podemos delegate found the MAS assembled for session. When Podemos' leader asked Silvia Lazarte what happened, she made no apologies, but said the MAS had decided to proceed without the opposition. Goitia also told poloff that in a recent interview with the government television station, the GOB used a voice-over to skew his comments.

¶4. (C) Goitia and Campos both complained about surveillance and discrimination within the Assembly. Both said they are followed on a regular basis. Campos said her "tail" is a young Venezuelan. Both also said that they have been threatened, as have their family members, because of their association with the opposition. Additionally, they lamented overt discrimination during the Assembly's sessions. Campos said MAS delegates openly insult opposition representatives, calling them "karas," a derogatory term for light-skinned Bolivians. Campos also said her purse is regularly searched upon entry into the Assembly while her MAS colleagues bypass

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security.

¶5. (C) None of the three delegates was optimistic about the Assembly's ability to move forward. One noted that after two months, the CA still has not begun its work. Jorge Lazarte blamed the lack of progress on Vice President Garcia Linera, who he said freely advocates "radical" positions with MAS delegates. Goitia said at the current pace, the Assembly will not finish its work within the one year allotted it by the enabling legislation. Goitia believed the MAS would continue to stall progress and present its draft constitution at the last minute, hoping representatives will prefer to approve a less-than-perfect draft as opposed to returning to their constituents empty-handed. He said the MAS constitution would easily pass the popular referendum, which requires only a simple majority vote. Campos, in turn, seemed resigned to defeat by the MAS, saying "we're only 60 representatives."

¶6. (C) Comment: The Assembly was scheduled to resume session on September 21, but the recess has been extended through September 25. All three representatives worried about continuing tension and the social sectors (allegedly MAS-controlled and Venezuelan-financed) temporarily living in Sucre, waiting for MAS instructions to march. In his September 19 meeting with the prefects, Garcia Linera proposed a two-thirds vote on departmental autonomy, land reform and hydrocarbons revenues and a simple majority vote on all other matters. Press reports indicate the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) and National Unity (UN) parties may be considering the offer, but that Podemos may reject the proposal, holding out for two-thirds vote on all issues. Meanwhile, President Morales has ordered the MAS deputies to approve their internal rules by simple majority by Wednesday September 27. While our legal interpretation of the enabling legislation supports Podemos' position in favor of a two-thirds majority, Garcia Linera's offer may be the best that they are going to get. End comment.

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